

January 2012



ST. JOHN'S GOOD NEWS

St. John's Episcopal Church
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FROM THE RECTOR:

Happy Epiphany, everybody!

This might reach you in time for January 6, the Feast Day of the Epiphany, which in the popular culture emphasizes the bringing of the gifts to the infant Jesus by the mysterious "Wise Men." It is too bad that Epiphany usually falls during the week because we don't get a chance to really elaborate theologically on this major feast day, which really is about the presentation of Christ to the world.

I've often wondered why there has not been a commercialization of Epiphany, like what happen during the Christmas season. When was the last time you received an Epiphany Card? Well, in Mexico and in other Latin American countries, Epiphany is bigger than Christmas. It is the time to exchange gifts, not necessarily at Christmas time. Perhaps, the reason for the non-emphasis of Epiphany in the U.S. is that there has not been an entire industry built around the Three Wise Men. Unlike the cuddly Christmas story, three mysterious strangers bringing most unusual gifts, does not lend it to endless Epiphany pageants, or give rise to annual Epiphany office parties.

So what is Epiphany really all about? The story we hear from Matthew on the feast day focuses on the point that Christ the infant, merits the homage of gifts reserved for a King by the nations of the world, as represented by the Three Kings, or the Magi. In effect, Epiphany is a preliminary public coronation of the Infant King. This is why it is called Epiphany, a manifestation to all the nations of the royal lineage of the Anointed One of God.

On the one hand, we might say that Jesus, the humble one who emphasized servant leadership, would possibly disavow such over-the-top

adulation and kingly manifestation. After all, the point of the Christmas Story is that God uses the humble and non-social registered people to be an integral part of God's Salvation Plan. Simplicity, mundane, the ordinary are words that describe the birth narratives of Luke and Matthew. That's the whole point of the story that Jesus was born in an animal shelter, amidst all that that represents, to drive home the point that God exalts the lowly.

On the other hand, the early Christian Church was intent on showing the world that Jesus was the Son of God, and as such, was the heir to the celestial Kingdom. As Christ the King, the Church reasons, the divine Christ has to be accorded all the kingly homage from the entire spectrum of humanity, as symbolized by the three Wise Men. Not content with that, the Church also linked Jesus as the long awaited Messiah, the King of Israel. Matthew drives home the point that, as the Messiah, Jesus is prophesized in the Hebrew Scriptures, and to reject Jesus the Messiah is the ultimate insult against God.

Maybe I've told you more than what you wanted to hear, but Epiphany is a most understated feast day. No matter, come to our Epiphany Feast Day celebration on the 6 of January at 6:30 PM. We will start with a brief Eucharist and wind up with our Annual Trifles event in the Parish Hall.

Father Al †

Thank You

On a personal note, I would like to thank the congregation of St. John's for your generous

monetary gift at Christmas. It is greatly appreciated. Thank you all.

Father Al †

SENIOR WARDEN'S MESSAGE

Here we are in the middle of the holiday season. Christmas is this next Sunday. And that means it's budget time!!!!



In the midst of all the festivities of Christmas Eve services, singing beautiful Christmas hymns, and eating lots of rich foods and goodies, the vestry is struggling to create a balanced church budget for 2012. That means we can't expect to spend more than the income we hope to have.

There are many items to consider on the budget. We have to make sure we have enough money to cover necessary expenses like utilities, salaries, supplies for the church office, wine and communion hosts, just to name a very few. All these items cost money. Marvin Rasmussen and Annette VanDover do an amazing job of keeping up with the finances of St. John's. Thank you for what you do! But they can't pluck numbers out of thin air. It is what it is.

Bear with me. This is leading to a point.

We can't approve a budget by "assuming" that money and pledges will come in like manna from heaven. If parishioners make pledges, sometimes things happen and people can't complete those pledges. The economy, lay-offs, and unemployment have not been kind to us. We plan for expected income based on what we received the previous year. It's like playing Whack-a-Mole. And some members just don't have it and are barely making it financially. We understand that.

If you can make a pledge of any amount, please do so. Whatever you feel you can live with and maintain. Just so we know what to count on. I

realize some people don't turn in a pledge card because they're afraid to make that commitment and then what if they can't keep up with it? That happens to a lot of us. Trust me, it wouldn't be the first time it's happened.

Based on the pledges we have received so far, we have to cut the 2012 budget by about \$39,000. Where do we make those cuts? What programs and ministries lose money? These are very hard decisions and some we don't like to make.

In order for St. John's to grow and prosper, we have to maintain some programs and expenses. Maybe you feel like we're always standing with our hand out but there's a reason for that. We can't function and run the physical aspect of the church and its' needs without money. The office sent out 121 pledge cards and we have received 79 back. By my calculations that's a 62% return.

The Vestry will meet again on December 27 to finalize the budget. Pray for the vestry and the budget. And have a lot of faith.

*Faithfully yours,
Linda Pemberton
Senior Warden*

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

As we move through the Christmas Season towards Epiphany, let's continue to honor the Babe, Jesus, in our hearts and in our lives. I believe Christmas comes each and every year because we humans forget so quickly the message Jesus brings! Just as decorations go up right after Halloween, they come down the day after Christmas. Consider keeping some reminder of the Holy Birth and the coming of the wise men until the Day of Epiphany (January 6) and see what a difference it makes in the start of the New Year.

December was certainly a busy month, both in the life of St John's and in our individual lives. Our Congregational Growth and Revitalization Committee continues to meet and brainstorm; I attended a meeting for Newcomer Ministry at the seminary; Fr Al had **another** birthday; the EYC put on a wonderful performance of "The

Gift of the Magi” which was enhanced by the participation of many of our parishioners; St. Francisco de Assis brought to us a fun evening with Las Posadas; and the Christmas Eve services were as always beautiful and filled with joy. Thanks to everyone who participated in some way in making St. John’s a wonderful place to make the journey through Advent to Christmas!

January will also be very full of activity. Our last confirmation class will meet on January 9 for practice and social; Bishop Dena Harrison will be at St. John’s for confirmation on January 15; our Annual Parish Meeting is January 22; and our first “5th Sunday” celebration will be January 29. Our wonderful 5th Sunday committee has agreed to continue through 2012; and our EYC always does a marvelous job of participating fully in the 10:30am service on 5th Sundays.

The adult classes on Sunday mornings (9:00 AM) and Tuesday evenings (6:30 PM) will begin meeting on January 8 and 10 respectively. The current topic for Sunday morning is “Is Hospitality the same as Welcome?” while the Tuesday evening group will begin an eclectic “lecture series” which will possibly include field trips, guest speakers, and special videos.

Thank you to everyone who makes life at St. John’s happen; if you need information about how to participate in any area of ministry at St. John’s, please feel free to contact me at the church office (512-836-3974) or email me at fjones@austinstjohns.org.

Blessings, Fay

EYC NEWS

I want to thank Annette for letting me turn this in late, because I am writing this after we returned home from the most beautiful Christmas Eve service we have ever attended. As I sat proudly watching my girls serve tonight, Makayla playing her cello and Shelby serving as an acolyte, I remember how our journey began 14 years earlier on Christmas Eve. As I sat and watched Shelby acolyte, she led Emily as she served as an acolyte for the first time. She served tonight simply because the church had the need, and by doing this she gave the greatest gift

of herself. Priya gave the same gift as she stepped up to help fill that same need. I know both beautiful girls had their own journeys that led them to serve this joyous night. I sat and watched Laura glow with pride as Devereux stood next to her in the choir as her sons look on them proudly. I thought about their journey to this one night. As I continued to look around the church I saw many faces I didn’t know, but I know the proud faces of their families: John and Laurie Williams as their children played their instruments with the choir, Ann Reed’s son watching her pass out candles, Bill and Debbie Cox’s son as he watched his parents serve with their many talents and so many others as they joined their families on this special night. I thought about their journeys home to spend time with family. As I did this I realize how blessed my family and I are to be a part of such a wonderful church family. There was no other place I wanted to be on this Christmas Eve than here at St. John’s. I also thought about how our journeys are never ending as we grow spiritually. I want to thank St. John’s for not only a part of my journey, but also a part of the journey of our amazing youth. My prayer for our youth is that they continue to give of themselves and step up to fill the needs of the church.

I want to give special thanks to our EYC for their wonderful performance of ‘The Gift of the Magi’ by O’Henry and for all of Fay’s help to pull this off. I want to thank David Petersen, Autumn and Tommy Jordan, and Anna (Fay’s granddaughter) for the backdrops. A big thanks to Carol Acurso, Mary Anne O’Brien, and Vicki Flegal for costumes and props that were loaned or given to use.

I want to thank all those that helped support the EYC Christmas Fundraiser. Hope everyone enjoyed what they purchased. I owe a big thanks to Fay, Mary Anne, and Sheri for helping to hand out the items.

Reminder that EYC will start meeting at 9 AM sharp on January 8th as well as selling t-shirts. These t-shirts are from St. John’s past events and will be sold for \$2 in the narthex.

Thanks for being a part of the journey!



Peace to all for the New Year!
Ranie Lewis

OUTREACH MINISTRY

December was a very good month for our Outreach Ministry. We had a Christmas Party at the OakCrest Manor Nursing Home on Monday the 19th of December for the 56 residents. They were treated to desserts and drinks served by members of St. John's who also led them in Christmas songs. They were given gifts, which included lap robes, made by Margaret Beare.

For the clients at the St. John's Community Center we were able to make 130 Christmas Baskets thanks to the help of the Round Rock Sertoma, State Farm, the parishioners of St. John's and Casis Elementary School who raised over 15,000 pounds of food in their annual food drive. Along with the donations of money of over \$2,100.00 given by parishioners and Round Rock Sertoma, we should have the Pantry stocked thru April or May. Thanks also to VFW Post 8787 through one of our parishioners and a member of the Post, Bill Bennett. Also we thank Roger and Ruth Hall for the donation of over 250 oranges to the Food Pantry for the Baskets.

The Giving Tree was also very successful thanks to the leadership of Bill and Linda Bennett who stepped into the breach to make it a success.

Bill Beare
Outreach Coordinator

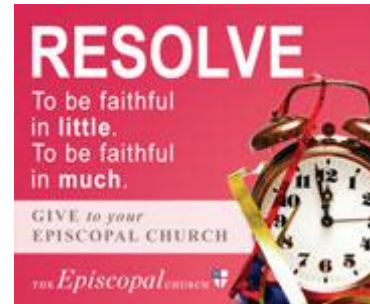


STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

The official ingathering of pledges for the fall commitment campaign was November 20. To date we have received 79 financial pledges for a total of \$151,260.00 pledged to the Operating

Fund and \$44,123.00 pledged to the Mortgage Fund.

We thank those who have already turned a pledge in for 2012. We are grateful for your response to the Vision and Ministries of St. John's.



EPIPHANY AND TRIFLES



There will be a brief service in the church at 6:30 PM. At 7 PM, we will gather in the Parish Hall for treats and fellowship. Plan to join us for the time-honored tradition of sharing trifles at St. John's on Epiphany. Everybody is encouraged to try their hand at making a Trifle cake, which the dictionary describes as, "a sponge cake spread with jam, soaked in wine, sprinkled with crushed macaroons, and topped with custard and whipped cream." Not sure how to make a trifle – we also greatly welcome cheese, vegetable, and fruit trays along with other "goodies." All are most acceptable. Bring your favorite. See you for this fun event, **Friday, January 6th**.



YOUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR:

Healing and Guidance: Theresa, Cyrus, Erica, Elizabeth, German, Erik, Melvin, Virginia, Tony, Jane, Mary, Margaret, Judy, Gil, Richard, Novella Jennifer, Andie, Madeline, Greg, Reed; Ruth, Kathy, Ron, Louise, Betsy, Mary Lou, Helen, Trish, Jerry, Bette, Frank

Home Bound: Jack, Barbara

GROUNDSKEEPER'S REPORT



Your humble servant has only a little grist for the mill of the January 2012 report. After three months of searing heat and killing drought, this past fall the weather moderated and showed a bit of mercy on our lawns and gardens. In fact, December, the last month of the year, the weather bestowed upon us a bountiful helping of rain. As you read this, dear reader, the foundation for a burgeoning crop of weeds has been laid down. By our spring workday, there will labor aplenty to which we may apply our hands. The prediction from on high and on higher is that weather conditions in 2012 will closely resemble the past year. This may mean that the City of Austin will continue the watering restrictions, which were imposed in the late summer-early fall. These require that our irrigation system be employed only once a week. If so, weekly attention to our trees and gardens will be needed. The parish almost lost some of its beautiful shrubs and trees to drought this last year. Stressed as they have been, care must be taken to prevent a second season of assault on our plants.

By the time this report comes to your attention, dear reader, the EYC members will have repainted (it is hoped by the sponsors) the YALL building. As a little bit of history, please recall that the parish had that building repaired extensively during the blistering weeks of summer. Your humble servant, in his role as assistant to the Junior Warden Hal Hughes had occasion to observe the two contractors, both near in age to myself, at work on the structure, starting early and ending early. When completed, the repairs have given us a serviceable forum for many uses. In fact, there have been many improvements or repairs. Our lands are so vast, however, that it is easy to over look the changes. Projects on tap for this year are the laying down of a layer of gravel around the outdoor altar and pew benches, changes to the low deck outside the parish building, and completion of the surprising involved project of building a playground box under the newly erected toddler swing set which serves to cushion falls that

inevitably occur when youngsters enjoy these playground appliances.

Two improvements that are not open to view because they are locked away in the green storage bin are a back-mounted sprayer instruction in the use of which your humble servant will give anyone who asks and a second riding lawnmower. These additions, and the second riding mower has been donated to the church through the kind offices of Hal Hughes, will assist in making lawn care more efficient and less of a chore.

Mike Davis

NewsLetter
DEADLINE

The deadline to submit articles for the February

Good News is Monday, January 16, 2012.

Please e-mail your article to:

AnnetteVan@aol.com

CONFIRMATION AND RECEPTION

St. John's will welcome Bishop Dena Harrison on Sunday, January 15, at the 10:30 service. She will be here to confirm those who are presently participating in the confirmation classes. It is always a joyous occasion when we can celebrate the Eucharist with one of our diocesan bishops.



Following the service we will have a reception for the bishop and the newly confirmed. Let Margaret Beare (837-2780) know what you can bring and how you can help. Your help will be greatly appreciated.



ABUNDANT LIVING

9th Annual Conference
February 27-29, 2012

This conference is for seniors, their family members, health care providers, residential care providers, social workers, and leaders of all faith communities. Take the opportunity to gain fresh insights into the spiritual aspects of aging. The University of Texas Medical Branch, Sealy Center on Aging, programs this three-day, two-night seminar. Conference pricing includes meals, lodging, socials, and speakers. To register or to learn more, visit campallen.org or call 866-334-CAMP.

Conference Rates: \$200 (Double Occupancy) and \$245 (Single Occupancy) Early Bird Rates: \$185 and \$225 (valid thru 2/13/12)



REMINDER FOR CHURCH LEADERS

All ministry reports are to be received in the church office by **January 9**. This will give us the time to format, copy and collate the Annual Report for distribution at the church meeting on January 22. The Rector, Senior and Junior Wardens, Treasurer, Ministry Leaders, Heads of Liturgical Ministries and Youth Ministries are expected to submit reports. The church office would greatly appreciate you e-mailing your report to AnnetteVan@aol.com. Bless You!

St. John's Episcopal Church

11201 Parkfield Drive, at Braker Lane
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SUNDAY SERVICES: 9:00 / 10:30 / 1:00

WEDNESDAY: 6:30 HC w/anointing

SATURDAY: 5:30 PM Holy Communion

The Rev'd **Albert R. Rodriguez**, *Rector*
The Rev'd **Rohani Weger**, *Assisting Clergy*
The Rev'd **Laurie McKim**, *Seminarian*

Mr. **Philip Riley**, *Organist and Choirmaster*
Mrs. **Fay Jones**, *Membership Coordinator*

VESTRY:

Linda Pemberton, *Senior Warden*; Hal Hughes, *Junior Warden*; Steve Mudge, *Clerk*;
Bill Beare, Terry Cox, Laura Faulkner,
David Petersen, Kay Soper, Paul Villarreal

OFFICERS:

Marvin Rasmussen – *Treasurer*
Annette VanDover – *Assistant Treasurer*

